

Forget health care — the biggest legislative battle in the House these days centers on the men's volleyball team at the University of California at Irvine. Seems the Anteaters are the innocent victims of a bitter partisan battle.

A noncontroversial measure introduced by Rep. John Campbell (R-Calif.) to honor the volleyball team for winning the national championship was to be voted on by voice vote Tuesday. But moments before the vote, House Education and Labor Chairman George Miller asked that it be pulled from the floor.

The reason? Payback.

The California Democrat was peeved that Campbell had, a few days earlier, organized a vote against Miller's measure to fund six water-recycling projects in the San Francisco Bay Area. So Miller used his influence to squash the volleyball resolution.

"I go up to George on the floor, and I said, 'George, what was the problem?'" Campbell recalled to a Roll Call reporter. "And he says, 'You voted against my water bill. ... There has to be a penalty for that, and this is the penalty. And I said, 'Well, OK, George, so is this dead?' And he says, 'We'll see.'"

Burn!

A Miller spokeswoman told HOH that Campbell started the legislative brouhaha by organizing the mostly partisan vote against the water-recycling bill, which, not unlike the volleyball resolution, should have gotten through under suspension of the rules.

Instead, the water measure was voted down; the Rules Committee is set to take it up today.

"Water-recycling bills also come to the floor regularly and usually pass pretty easily," the spokeswoman said. "In fact, five Republican Members have had their water recycling bills approved this year, almost all by voice vote. It's too bad ... Rep. Campbell chose to be partisan."

Campbell said he voted against Miller's bill because it would direct water to San Francisco instead of the Golden State's Central Valley, which is in the midst of a serious drought. Twenty-five percent of the H2O from Campbell's district would be redirected, he added. "So I'm supposed to give up water from the rest of the state for San Francisco? I mean, give me a break," Campbell said.

Guess the ball is back in Miller's court. ...